



R E P R E S E N T A T I V E R U S H H O L T

# Report To Central New Jersey

MARCH 2004

Dear Friend:

Families and individuals in central New Jersey are working hard to meet daily challenges. Though the economy is slow to recover fully and our troops are still in harm's way, we are rising to the occasion. We have faced difficult circumstances in the past, and we will meet the challenges before us today.

I continue to work with people from both sides of the aisle to address issues such as health care affordability, pension security, and care for our veterans. Also, all of us in New Jersey want to see more job creation and economic opportunity. In December, when I hosted *Einstein's Alley: The Economic Summit*, I heard from local businesses and community leaders that our area could benefit from, among other things, targeted tax incentives that promote research & development, and creative solutions that help small businesses pay for employees' health insurance. I am also working to make sure that our young people are taught the skills they will need to be tomorrow's workforce.

I was disappointed that the President's proposed budget for 2005 would cut funding for many priorities, including funds needed for veterans health care (see related story), hometown security (see related story), environmental clean-up, and putting more police on the street. Sadder still, these cuts come at a time when the budget includes billions in tax cuts that benefit the very wealthy, and \$46 billion in special payments to HMOs that were included in the flawed Medicare bill that passed last year.

There is much work to be done in Washington, and the articles in this newsletter describe some of the things I'm working on. In order for me to give voice to your specific concerns, I need to hear from you. Please take the time to fill out and return the attached survey, and if you are able, please come to talk with me in person at one of my upcoming community meetings. If you are unable, please feel free to contact me by letter (address below), e-mail (through my web site at [www.holt.house.gov](http://www.holt.house.gov)) or phone (toll free at 1-87-RUSH-HOLT).

I hope the information in this newsletter is helpful, and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Rush Holt  
Member of Congress

## **New Jersey Office:**

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**E-Mail (through my web site):** [www.holt.house.gov](http://www.holt.house.gov)

## Congressional Issue Questionnaire

This questionnaire is not intended to be comprehensive or scientific. Rather, it is simply a way for you to communicate your thoughts on various issues so that I can better serve you in Washington. Please feel free to give multiple answers for each question, or to write in your own responses.

1. *If the federal government wanted to help your family the most, it would invest in:*

- ☐ Health care and meaningful Rx drug coverage under Medicare
- ☐ Job creation
- ☐ Clean air, clean water, and preservation of open space
- ☐ National defense and homeland security.
- ☐ Social Security and pension protection
- ☐ Tax cuts
- ☐ Public schools and higher education
- ☐ Transportation planning
- ☐ Reducing crime
- ☐ Health care coverage and affordability
- ☐ Balancing the federal budget
- ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

2. *As you may know, Congress recently passed and the President signed into law new Medicare legislation that provides prescription drug benefits for senior citizens and changes the way Medicare will cover the medical expenses of some senior citizens. How much have you heard or read about these changes to Medicare?*

- ☐ A great deal
- ☐ A fair amount
- ☐ Just some
- ☐ Nothing at all

3. *Overall, would you say that your opinion of the new Medicare legislation is:*

- ☐ Very positive
- ☐ Somewhat positive
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Somewhat negative
- ☐ Very negative

4. *When your family deals with health care issues, which of the following occupies the most time, energy, and money?*

- ☐ Prescription drug prices
- ☐ Nursing home quality and accessibility
- ☐ Home health care
- ☐ Affording health insurance
- ☐ Dealing with HMOs and their decisions
- ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_

Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

*Sign-up with your e-mail address and receive periodic e-mail updates from me on activity in Congress.*

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

**Please mail this questionnaire to me at:  
Representative Rush Holt  
50 Washington Road  
West Windsor, NJ 08550**

## Fighting to Improve Veterans Benefits

[www.holt.house.gov](http://www.holt.house.gov)

**T**he men and women who have defended our country need and deserve the care that was promised to them. Unfortunately, the President's budget for 2005 is \$1.2 billion short of the amount that the Department of Veterans Affairs says it needs to meet the needs of our current veterans. That is the Administration's own estimate; veterans groups calculate an even greater need. This is a travesty.

Last month, I released a Congressional report documenting the effects these cuts would have on veterans in New Jersey. According to the report, the President's budget proposal would:

- **Cause tens of thousands of New Jersey veterans to drop out of the VA health care system.**

An estimated 43,000 New Jersey veterans, including about 8,200 in active treatment, would likely be unable to afford the increased

**I will continue to fight in Congress to increase VA funding to improve the quality, access, and timeliness of care.**

costs for VA health care proposed in the budget, causing them to drop out of the VA system.

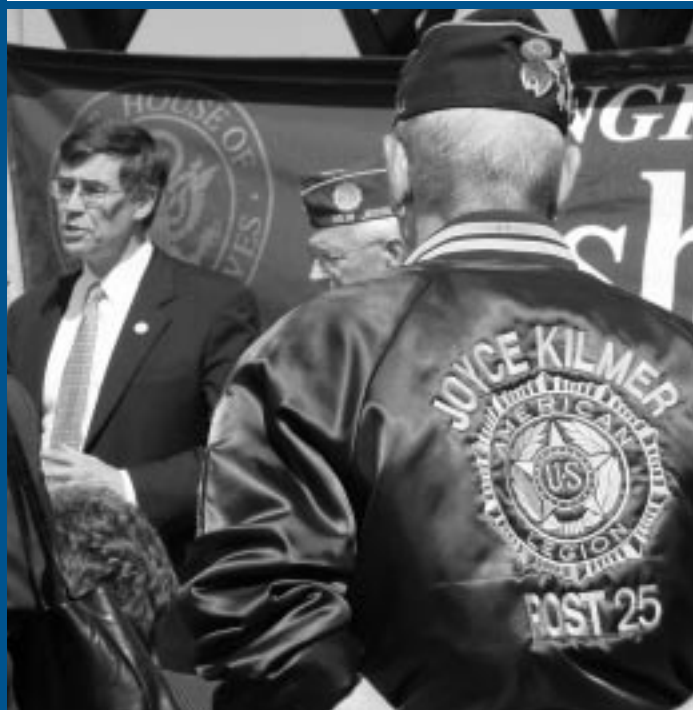
- **Force many veterans in New Jersey to pay an additional \$350 or more each year for VA care.**

Veterans who remain in the VA system would have to pay more. The average cost for these veterans would be more than \$350 annually. Some New Jersey veterans could face new fees of \$550 or more.

- **Deny care to thousands of New Jersey veterans.** The President's budget would continue to freeze VA enrollment for "Priority 8" veterans, preventing an estimated 4,400 veterans in New Jersey from enrolling to receive care.

Our government needs to live up to the promises made to its veterans. They were there when we needed them, now it's our turn to be there for them. I will continue to fight in Congress to increase VA funding to improve the quality, access, and timeliness of care. ▶

*Rush speaks out at a recent press conference against proposed Congressional cuts to veterans' benefits at an American Legion post in Milltown.*



## Teaching Young People About Rights and Responsibility

[www.holt.house.gov](http://www.holt.house.gov)

**C**ivic education programs teach young people to understand and act upon the core values of citizenship. That is why I support programs such as “We, the People,” which is administered by the Center for Civic Education and funded by the U.S. Department of Education. “We, the People” stresses academic achievement, social responsibility, and respect for others by teaching young people about the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights. Last year, Morghan Transue of South Brunswick High School won the group’s nation-wide contest with a poignant essay on the landmark decision *Marbury v. Madison*.

As a member of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, I believe it is critically important to teach young people the rights and responsibilities that come with democracy. As I visit schools and colleges through the district, I discuss the values and principles that are fundamental to the American experience so that we can develop active and responsible citizens. ▶

*Rush discusses with students why it is important to our democracy that they become informed and active citizens.*



## Working to Improve Health Care, Rx Coverage

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**L**ate last year, Congress passed a new Medicare law that is deeply flawed. It features a meager benefit, forces seniors to get prescriptions through managed care plans, begins a privatization experiment that could weaken the entire Medicare system, and will raise premiums and deductibles for many of central New Jersey's seniors.

The new Medicare law also cut the amount of money that Medicare reimburses oncologists for cancer drugs administered as part of chemotherapy. As a result, many doctors are reducing nursing staffs and refusing to offer chemotherapy in their offices. Because more than half of the 1.5 million people diagnosed with cancer each year are covered by Medicare, the results for cancer patients are potentially widespread.

I voted against the new law because I believe that Congress needs to replace it with a meaningful Medicare prescription drug benefit that is voluntary, universal, affordable, and guaranteed. **D**

**New Jersey has the third highest rate of cancer in the country. Early detection and access to medicine are critical to defeating the disease. This is just another reason why the new Medicare law needs to be repealed and replaced with a better version.**



*Rush talks with senior citizens in Monroe Township about his work in Congress to both protect and improve Medicare and Social Security.*

## Making Mail Delivery Safe and Efficient

**T**he recent appearance of ricin-tainted mail in Washington, D.C. is a reminder that our postal system is still vulnerable to tampering. In 2001, our area had direct experience with this when at least one anthrax-tainted letter was mailed from a postal drop box in Princeton, NJ, and processed at a sorting facility in Hamilton, NJ. Unfortunately, it seems that the federal government has learned very little since then.

The United States Postal Service (USPS) was denied adequate funding to protect postal employees and the general public from the risk of bio-terrorism in 2004 and again in the President's budget proposal for 2005. I have written to the President to urge him to reverse course and make sustained, significant investment in our postal system to ensure that we are prepared to prevent,

detect, and respond to bio-terrorism through the mail. This investment makes sense. A safe postal delivery system is critical not only for our homeland security, but also for our economic security.

Most mail deliveries are perfectly safe, but even then, there can be problems. In many senior communities, mail is delivered to far-away mailboxes that are difficult for some people to get to due to poor health or inclement weather. That is why I support H.R. 2339, bipartisan legislation that would require the USPS to provide door delivery service to people residing in senior communities. Door delivery service would be a significant help to people who rely on mail service for important items such as medication, Social Security benefits, and medical correspondence. **D**

## Town Hall Meetings

[www.holt.house.gov](http://www.holt.house.gov)

Please come join me at one of these upcoming meetings to discuss issues such as job creation, Medicare and prescription drugs, hometown security, open space, affordable housing, and other issues that are on your mind.

### Office Hours

Come and speak with me one-on-one during the following "Office Hours."

#### **Saturday, March 13**

1:00 – 2:30 p.m.

Borough Hall  
Second Street, Frenchtown

### Town Meetings

Please join me at these upcoming Town Hall Meetings.

#### **March 13, 2004**

10:00 – 11:30 a.m.

Council Chambers  
475 DeMott Lane, Somerset

#### **March 15, 2004**

7:00 – 8:30 p.m.

Old Bridge Library  
1 Old Bridge Plaza, Old Bridge  
(next to the senior center)

#### **March 27, 2004**

2:00 – 3:30 p.m.

Eatontown Borough Community Center  
58 Monmouth Road, Eatontown

Special town hall meeting to discuss community efforts regarding Fort Monmouth and the upcoming round of base closures.

### Financial Aid Workshops

Come learn about how to finance a college education at this workshop, presented by the Sallie Mae Fund.

#### **March 13, 2004**

9:00 a.m.

Franklin High School  
415 Francis Street, Franklin


#### **March 27, 2004**

9:00 a.m.

Monmouth Regional High School  
1 Norman J. Field Way, Tinton Falls

Representative Rush Holt  
50 Washington Road  
West Windsor, NJ 08550

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M.C.  
PRSRT-STD